

# Overnight Loaf

## *Adapted from Jim Lahey's No-Knead Overnight Bread Recipe*

Makes one freeform or pan loaf.

### -- INGREDIENTS --

- 3 cups (400 grams) bread flour
- 1 1/4 teaspoons (8 grams) table salt
- 1/4 teaspoon (1 gram) instant or other active dry yeast
- 1 1/3 cups (300 grams) cool water (55 to 65 degrees F)
- Wheat bran, rice flour, cornmeal, or additional flour, for dusting



### NOTE:

This is a recipe for anyone who wants to start experimenting with longer fermentation, without all of the babysitting and mess that comes with sourdough! It's a bit like a "choose-your-own adventure." Whether you bake the bread free-form or in a loaf pan, same-day or next-day, using a dutch oven or pizza stone or without either, know that you're going to have delicious bread. The steps may look like a lot at first glance, but don't worry, we're just explaining all of these options.

It's a fairly straight-forward process, that just requires a little patience and planning - you'll get the hang of it in no time!

### -- MATERIALS NEEDED --

- One medium mixing bowl
- Measuring cups and spoons, and/or a (cheap) digital kitchen scale
- One mixing spoon (or use your hands to mix)
- Optional but recommended:
  - a bowl scraper, for removing the dough from the bowl
  - a dough/bench knife, for moving and shaping the dough
  - dutch oven or pizza stone, for baking
  - a bread lame, sharp knife, or razor for scoring the loaf.

## -- PROCESS --

### The Night Before

#### **Mix and First Rise**

- In a medium bowl, stir together the flour, salt, and yeast.
- Add the water to the dry ingredients.
- Using a spoon or your hand, mix until you have a wet, sticky dough, about 30 seconds. Seriously, it will feel pretty sticky to the touch. If it's not, mix in another tablespoon or two of water and mix it in.
  - Make sure to get all of the dry bits of flour from the bottom of the bowl!
- Cover the bowl with a plate, tea towel, or plastic bag, and let it sit at warmish room temperature (about 72 degrees F) and out of direct sunlight.
- Continue the rise until the surface is dotted with bubbles and the dough is more than doubled in size. This will take a minimum of 12 hours and up to 18 hours. This slow rise ferment is the key to getting complex flavor.

### Morning

#### **Shaping and Second Rise:**

- After the long rise, generously dust your work surface with flour.
- Use a bowl scraper (or rubber spatula, or your hands) to scrape the dough out of the bowl and onto the surface in one piece.
  - When you begin to pull the dough away from the bowl, it will want to cling in long strands (yay, gluten development!), and it will be quite loose and sticky. This is good! Do not add more flour!
- Use lightly floured hands to lift the edges of the dough up and in, toward the center. After the edges are pulled into the center, flip the dough over, and do some nudging and tucking around the dough to make it round.
  - **Loaf Pan Option** - Instead of rounding the loaf, roll the loaf lightly to achieve a log-like shape, approximately the length of your loaf pan.. Then transfer the loaf to the loaf pan (greased or non-stick), seam-side down.
- Line a medium sized bowl (one big enough to hold your dough - clean the mixing bowl, if you want to reuse it here) with a tea towel or similar cloth. Dust the towel with wheat bran, rice flour, cornmeal, or flour.
- Use your hands or a bowl scraper to gently lift the dough up from the counter. Gently lift the loaf onto the towel-lined bowl, so it is still seam side down.

- Dust the top of the dough with more flour/bran/meal, and fold the ends of the towel loosely over the dough to cover it (or cover it with a new towel).
  - **Loaf Pan Option:** Skip the dough transfer, but still dust the top of the dough. Cover the loaf pan with the tea towel.
- Place it in a warm (75-80 F), draft-free spot to rise for 1 to 2 hours. The dough is ready when it is almost doubled. If you gently poke it with your finger, it should hold the impression. If it doesn't, give it another 15 minutes and check again.

### **Preparing to Bake / Scoring:**

- About half an hour before the end of the second rise, set the oven to preheat to 475 degrees F.
  - Place a dutch oven (with cover) or pizza stone inside the oven to preheat as well, if you plan to use either method (we want them nice and hot). For the pizza stone method, also place an old sheet/roasting pan on the rack below.
- Once your oven is fully preheated, cut a piece of parchment large enough to fit your dough onto, with enough “overhang” to help you pick up and lower the loaf into a dutch oven or onto a pizza stone.
- Dust the surface of the parchment with flour/bran/meal.
- For a free-form loaf, GENTLY invert the dough onto the dusted parchment. For the loaf pan option, skip this step.
  - On a freeform loaf, the seam will open while baking like a rustic bloom.

### **Transferring to the Oven / Baking:**

- **Dutch Oven:**
  - Carefully remove your dutch oven (with mitts!) and remove the cover.
  - Pick up the parchment to GENTLY place your free form loaf (parchment and all) into the dutch oven. (For loaf pan method, put the whole loaf pan directly into the dutch oven.)
  - Cover the dutch oven and carefully place it back into the oven.
  - Bake covered for 30 minutes.
  - Remove the cover, lower the oven temp to 450, and continue baking for 15-20 minutes, until well-browned.
- **Using a pizza stone:**
  - Prepare one cup of warm water (preferably in a plastic container or cup).
  - When you are ready to load in your loaf, you'll want to move quickly but carefully. Open the oven, and immediately cover the inside of the glass

window of your oven with a towel (to prevent any water from dropping onto it and potentially shattering the glass).

- Load in your loaf pan, or your free-form loaf on parchment, onto the stone.
  - Grab your water and CAREFULLY pour it into the hot sheet pan below.
  - Quickly remove the towel from the door and close the oven to trap the steam as much as possible. Bake for 30 minutes.
  - Lower the heat to 450 and open your oven to remove the steamer pan (VERY carefully, as there may still be some hot water in it).
  - Rotate the loaf, and continue baking for 15-20 minutes, until well-browned.
- Your bread will be done when tapping on the bottom sounds hollow, and/or the internal temperature reads 205 degrees F.
  - Cool your bread completely before breaking into it (this usually takes about an hour). This is the hardest part...but it's worth it!
    - Cool in a loaf pan for at least 20 minutes before removing. To loosen the loaf, tap the bottom of the pan on the edge of your counter, then invert to allow the loaf to slip out. If it won't come out, allow it to cool longer, and/or use a butter knife to loosen the sides and help pull out the bread.
    - Released pan bread and freeform breads should be cooled on a wire rack, or leaning against a wall on your counter. This is to allow air to circulate all around it.

## **How should I eat and store my bread?**

This depends on how fast you (and/or your household) eat bread! One method is to just keep the cut-side down on your counter-top, no bag or cover needed, up to a few days. If you prefer to tuck it away, you can keep it in a brown bag to preserve the crisp crust, or store in a bread box. If you want it to stay super soft, you can keep it in a plastic bag.

Enjoy the bread fresh, or toast it lightly to bring out the best of its flavors and textures. Slather it with nut butter, jam, butter, or make a hearty sandwich. If you want to keep your bread around for longer, I'd recommend slicing and freezing it for up to 3 months. You can defrost the bread at room temperature, or toast it by the slice for immediate consumption.

## **Substitutions / Additions**

Once you get the hang of it, I strongly encourage you to experiment with making this recipe your own! With most flours, you can sub out  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 1 cup of the bread flour with a different white or whole grain flour. You'll surely notice a big difference, not just in the flavor of the baked loaf, but in working with the dough itself. You'll likely find that you need to add more or less water, shorter or longer proofing and bake times, more or less flour, etc to get the results you want. You can also add any other dry mix-ins you like (nuts, seeds, dried fruits, or chocolate???) into the dough at the mixing stage. It's all fair game, so have fun with it!